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REFLECTIONS

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ON THE

RUINS OF AN ANCIENT CATHEDRAL;

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

An ELEGY

ON

WINTER.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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P R E F A C E.

TH E Author of the following Pages is a new Adventurer in the Field of Letters, having never before laid a Tax on the Public to re-pay his Labours. He writes not to acquire *Profit*, nor is he actuated in it by the Desire of Praise; but merely for his own Entertainment in the Hours of Vacancy.

As he is not so *vain* as to imagine himself intitled to the Laurels of Fame, so on the other Hand he is not so *servile* as to express an *unfelt Diffidence* by telling the World he thinks this little Performance *absolutely beneath* their Notice. The *first* would be *Presumption*, the last a *Falshood*; both which are equally the Objects of his Detestation.

Without any Pretention to *Excellence*, he hopes to walk unmolested in the safer Paths of Mediocrity. And although he is utterly regardless what Sentence the *Little Tribe* of *mere Hypercritics* may pass upon it, yet he desires ever to pay due Respect to the impartial Judgment of *candid Criticism*, even though it should administer Chastisement.

If what has afforded *him* some Pleasure in writing, can yeild any to his *Readers*, he will rest intirely satisfied. But should this not be the Case, it may afford the Purchasers some Satisfaction to be inform'd, that the Profits arising from it's Sale will be appropriated to the Relief of an *Honest Man* to whom Fortune has not been lavish in her Favours: For the Author does not intend to put a Shilling of it into his own Pocket.

This is all he thinks necessary to say on Behalf of a Pamphlet not entirely destitute of Entertainment, and which cannot in any Degree relax the sacred Obligations of *Religion* and *social Virtue*, or give the least Sanction to Immorality.

January 2, 1770.

REFLECTIONS

P R E F A C E

THE Author of the following pages is a new Adventurer in the Field of Literature, having never before laid a Tax on the Public to re-pay his Expenses. He writes not to acquire Fame, nor is he actuated in it by the Desire of Profit, but merely for his own Entertainment in the Hours of Vacancy.

As he is not so vain as to imagine himself intitled to the Laurels of Fame, so on the other hand he is not so humble as to expect an unask'd Distinction by telling the World he thinks this little Performance absolutely worthy their Notice. The few words he has here written, the last a Response, both which are equally the Objects of his Dedication.

Without any Pretension to Excellence, he hopes to walk unscolded in the later Paths of Mediocrity. And although he is much regarded what Sentence the Fair Sex or some Spectator may pass upon it, yet he desires ever to pay due Respect to the impartial Judgment of candid Critics, even though it should administer Chastisement.

If what has afforded him some Pleasure in writing, can yield any to his Readers, he will be amply rewarded. But should this not be the Case, it may afford the Purchaser some Satisfaction to be inform'd, that the Poet is willing from it's Sale will be appropriated to the Relief of an ill-dress'd Man to whom Fortune has not been fav'ring in her Favour: For the Author does not intend to put a Shilling of it into his own Pocket.

There is all he thinks proper to say on Behalf of a Transcriber not entirely destitute of Talent, and which cannot in any Manner relax the sacred Obligations of Fidelity, and solicit to give the full Sanction to immortality.

January 1770.

R E F L E C T I O N S

RUINS of an Ancient CATHEDRAL

O THOU *, most pensive of the sacred nine!
From whose sad eye the chrystal tears descend;

Who sorrowing sit'ft with mournful cypress crown'd,
Assist my song; instruct my verse to flow;
In concert with thy melancholly lyre.

Before my eyes a striking scene's display'd
Of ancient grandeur humbled to the dust.
No longer shall devotions sons approach
The portal wide, or on the glittering fane
With transport gaze, on which the radiant sun

• Melpomene

B

Shep

Shed trembling lustre; or the pale-fac'd Moon
 Nightly illumin'd with her silver ray.

Time was, but now, alas! that time is o'er,
 When with the voice of harmony divine
 These hoary walls (the work of pious hands
 Now laid in dust) resounded far and wide.

Thro' each apartment of the sacred dome,
 Devotion led her votaries---led her sons
 To early matins or to evening song.
 Then the full choir with heav'nly music rang,
 While each proud arch return'd the solemn sound
 Of swelling organs. Then the hallow'd lamps
 Illustrious blaz'd on high; the waxen tapers
 Beam'd radiance round, and from the sculptur'd walls
 Darted refulgence. Here religion's sons,
 (Secure from interruption and the snares
 Of public life,) with *her* communion held,
 And tasted joys divine--celestial peace.
 From hence, the voice of pray'r, and vocal praise
 Ascended swift, and pierc'd the azure vault,

And rent the chrystal regions of the skies,
 And pass'd the sacred courts of deity;
 Whilst list'ning angels pleas'd, their ears inclin'd,
 And in the heav'nly chorus join'd their song.

No longer now the solemn swelling sound
 Pours through the ample dome, and list'ning arch;
 The awful music of devotion's strains:
 No longer now the sacred white-rob'd bands
 Traverse the ayles, or fill the vocal choir:
 Hush'd in eternal silence are their tongues;
 No more their feet these hallow'd pavements tread;
 Swept from the scenes, by Death's resistless hand,
 In the dark chambers of the tomb they dwell.
 Now the rich columns, and th' historic roof,
 The lengthen'd ayles, with starry lamps illum'd,
 The stately arch, the portico sublime,
 Have lost---for ever lost,---their pristine grandeur;
 To earth they're fall'n and blended with the dust.

Behold! the hallow'd walks of holy men,
 Now tenanted by *reptiles*---overgrown

With

With noxious weeds, and rough with shaggy thorn.
 Here glides the speckl'd snake---there adders hiss,
 And toad's hoarse croaking wound the affrighted ear;
 Or bats assembling in dim-twilight's shade
 Wheel round the moulder'd pile, and flap their leathern wings

See yon old cloister, where the ivy creeps
 With slow but rooting steps: there Time's sharp tooth
 Has made deep furrows---there the slimy snail
 And lizard make abode---Once 'twas adorn'd
 With sacred imagery---sculptur'd saints
 Stood there inspirin'd with tapers burning round:
 Now, of its ornamental glory stript,
 Naked it stands, and totters to its base.

Here soon as evening with her dusky shroud
 Obscures the face of day, and spreads her gloom,
 The melancholly bird of silent night
 Waves her grey pinions, and with screaming cries
 Resumes her mansion in the clefted walls.

There, pensive Melancholy sits enthron'd
 In dusky state, and o'er the hoary pile

Spreads

Spreads her brown wings, and mourns departed grandeur.
 When, half unveil'd thro' fleecy clouds, the face
 Of silver Cynthia faint illumines the earth,
 And gilds the shadowy scene with feeble light,
 If some lone trav'ler roves these walls along,
 And superstition's pow'r his breast invades,
 With horror chill'd, his pregnant fancy teems
 With births unnat'ral--Fear's illusive train;
 He sees, or thinks he sees, wild phantoms rise.
 Trembling he starts to hear the whistling winds
 Sing in the vaults, and through the rifted arch,
 Or fear-struck reptiles rustling to their cells.

His lab'ring eye, by mimic fancy led,
 Sees visionary shapes and spectres drear
 Glide through the ruin'd ayles with visage thin--
 Hang o'er the hollow tombs, and whit'ning bones,
 Or faintly scream along the moss-grown walls.

These scenes, the sober heav'n-illumin'd eye
 Of reason ne'er beholds--The bugbears these
 Of ignorance, and superstition join'd,

In darkness born—the tales of winter's eve
When *fear* contracts the circle round the fire.

But though this eye, this faculty divine
(Bright emanation of the eternal mind)
Sees not these phantoms of a brain diseas'd,
Yet with a pleasing rev'rence she explores
These venerable scenes. Here Wisdom's voice
Daily instructs the pensive visitant,
And with a silent eloquence proclaims
Her awful dictates in the ear of man.

To these instructive scenes let me resort
When Folly tempts---when Pleasure's tuneful tongue
Chants soft the syren's song, and Vice allures.
Here let Ambition view her noblest schemes
All disconcerted--all her boasted glory
For ever fall'n--for ever laid in dust.

Now low, half buried in the lap of earth
Recline the polish'd pillars; and beneath,
Obscur'd with weeds and grass the letter'd floor
No longer tells the trav'lers curious eye

What

What bones repose beneath : In silence here,
 Unknowing who revisits their abode,
 Companions of the worm, in peace they rest.

Whilst o'er these wide-extended vaults I rove,
 This school of Wisdom and this court of Death
 “ *Replete with silent monitors around*” *
 Let every earth-born passion be allay'd,
 And serious thoughts employ my pensive mind,

From these sad shrines, with ruin circl'd round,
 The giddy vot'ries of delusive vice
 Incessant seek to fly : The truths here taught
 Grate harsh on Pleasure's ear, and frequent meet
 Reproof from fools : But Wisdom's sons indulge
 The awful precept--realise it's sense,
 And, by the steps of this ascending scale,
 Arise to contemplations more divine.

O Contemplation, pure Religion's friend !
 Lead me, O lead me to thy mossy cell,
 In the cool grot, beside the chrystal rill.

• Young.

There

There let me thy sweet converse oft enjoy,
 While list'ning to the music of thy tongue
 I sit enraptur'd. Strengthen thou my mind,
 And when thou risest, bear me on thy wings
 To those pure regions where the heav'n-born soul
 Enjoys the radiance of celestial day.

See yon vast fragment! once a stately tower!
 That thro' long ages mock'd the flow attacks
 Of all-consuming Time: In vain the storms
 Beat thick and strong—in vain the roaring winds
 Pour'd forth the furious blast—lightnings in vain
 With keen vibrations darted thro' the gloom!
 Or in the bosom of th' aerial space
 Roll'd bellowing thunders: still secure it stood,
 And raging elements made war in vain.

But Time, (to human works the greatest foe)
 His slow, but sure attack, incessant made;
 And fix'd his iron teeth upon these walls
 Now in sad ruin laid: on yon old turret,
 With ivy crown'd and nodding to it's base,

There

Behold

Behold he sits, and hourly drops a stone.
 Thus all the boasted works of human art
 Shall bow to Time—thus fall beneath his hand.
 The stately domes, the cloud-invading tow'rs,
 The blazing temples, proudly eminent,
 Though deep in earth their broad foundations lie—
 Though rocks of adamant their base sustain,
 Yet these must fall—and fall to rise no more.

And O! alarming thought! not only these,
 The puny works of men, but all that lies
 Beneath the sun's *broad-eye*—nay more—the Sun
 Himself—the Moon, and all the radiant Host
 That deck heav'n's concave, and illumine the world
 With light celestial---All must sink, expire,
 And *vanish as a scroll!* What then is man?
 Where will he hide in this stupendous ruin?
 Amidst the shock of crashing elements,
 Of heav'n's dissolving, and a world on fire,
 Where will he refuge find? “In me” (says Virtue)
 “Tis I, can in that awful hour support
 “The naked, helpless, disembodied spirit---

" Become it's passport to the realms of bliss,

" And lead it to it's mansion in the skies."

To this important period let my thoughts,

As to their centre, tend : here let me rest

And take a solemn pause---here let me view

That state which hourly waits the sons of men---

That state, which once possess'd, will know no change.

Though now the pulse of life beats high and strong---

Though firm-brac'd nerves this curious frame sustain,

And young-ey'd Health fits smiling on my brow,

With tarriance unconstrain'd ; yet soon stern Time

With hasty step my dwelling will approach,

And with his unrelenting scythe cut down

The stem of life. Then, then this active hand

Will cease to execute---this head to plan---

New schemes of future action. To the dust,

Low in the damp, dark vault consign'd to dwell ;

The *hand* that guides this pen---the *eye* that reads

Shall sink to rise no more, but in the cave

Of deep oblivion laid, with kindred worms

Take an eternal leave of all mankind.

WINTER,

W I N T E R,

A N

E L E G Y.

NO more the beauteous scenes of opening spring,
 No more gay summer, deck'd with full-blown flow'rs,
 Or autumn's golden stores, the muse shall sing,
 Which ripen'd harvest on this island pours.

These pleasing scenes no longer greet our eyes,
 Far different prospects claim the pensive lay;
 The sun thro' vapours dense, and lowring skies,
 With radiance faint emits the feeble ray.

In gloomy state bleak winter reigns around,
 In silence he his barren sceptre sways;
 Nor leaves the trees, nor flow'rs adorn the ground;
 Long are the tedious nights, and dull the short-liv'd days.

From northern climes arise the swift-wing'd storms,

Indignant now the thick impetuous rains

Obscure the face of day, and heav'n deforms;

Or fleecy snows descending veil the plains.

The furious winds in murm'ring tempests rise,

And pond'rous hailstones on the pavements bound;

They rush resistless thro' the sounding skies,

And swell the rills, and whiten all the ground.

Now tow'ring oaks, that crown the lofty wood,

The sweeping blast no longer can withstand;

And poplars, trembling o'er the winding flood,

Spread wide their falling ruins o'er the land.

No longer now their naked arms they rear,

By furious winds up-rooted from their base;

No longer wave their lofty tops in air,

Nor mountain's brow, nor river's bank they grace.

Sometimes when night her star-deck'd mantle spreads,

Hush'd are the winds, and not a breeze complains:

O'er the brown woods, bleak hills, and squalid meads,

An awful, melancholly silence reigns.

Then

Then shining splendid o'er the blue serene,
 Adorn'd with num'rous twinkling worlds of light,
 Majestically reigns Night's argent queen,
 And sheds mild lustre o'er the face of night.

As down th' etherial vault she bends her way,
 Whilst stars unnumber'd on her path attend,
 The seeds of frost in thick-wedg'd squadrons stray,
 And lucid pearls on every thorn descend.

The crisped brooks unvaried brightness wear,
 The leafless groves with sparkling gems are drest,
 And nature's brilliants on each spray appear,
 And earth's incrust'd with a silver vest.

A fullen silence reigns o'er all the fields,
 The voice of echo now forsakes the plains;
 No sound the grove, no sound the valley yields,
 (And murmuring rills are bound in icy chains)

Save where the owl complaining to the moon
 With screaming cry torments the list'ning ear,
 Save where the deep-mouth'd passing bell's sad tone
 Proclaims Death's conquest through the yielding air.

Now from her covert stol'n the tim'rous hare

In search of food explores the iron fields,

Beneath the new-fall'n snow she seeks her fare,

And crops those scanty stores the season yields.

But when from eastern hills the grey-ey'd dawn,

With rosy feet, proclaims th' approach of day ;

When golden Phœbus ushers in the morn,

And gilds the pearly landskip with his ray.

The garb of innocence all objects wear,

Millions of sparkling gems the woods adorn ;

One shining waste the fields and plains appear,

And lucid chrystals deck the pointed thorn.

Still as the shining beams advancing rise,

There^{ir} genial warmth dissolves th' imprison'd floods ;

Still as his splendor gleams thro' cloudless skies

Descend soft show'rs throughout the fringed woods.

Now sweetly chirping hop the birds around,

Shake their gay plumes, and twitter feeble lays ;

Haunt the barn-door, or seek the vacant ground,

And faintly strive to wake the voice of praise.

But

But when, low hov'ring o'er the western sea,
 The full-orb'd sun the horizon illumines;
 Warn'd by approaching night, they hast away,
 And each a safe, warm lodging now resumes.

The lowing herds, with ling'ring steps and slow,
 No longer crop the cold and frozen grafs;
 But seek beneath the ricks of fragrant hay,
 The long dull hours of pinching night to pass.

Now poverty attacks the lab'ring swain,
 Now chilling ^{Cold} ~~cold~~ his shiv'ring limbs arrest;
 Stern Winter locks the sources of his gain,
 And pale-fac'd Want severe invades his breast.

In this sad season let the affluent lend
 Kind help to those whom Fortune may deny;
 In this sad season may they find a friend,
 Whose timely bounty may their wants supply.

O Charity divine! Celestial Maid!
 Thou sacred offspring of th' eternal mind!
 Let not thy joy-dispensing hand be stay'd,
 Whilst thou an object worthy thee can'st find.

Let all who thy immortal worth have known,
 To helpless mis'ry grant the wish'd for-joy;
 Make that invaluable worth their own,
 And life's short date in bounteous deeds employ.

Then shall the guardian Angel of the Just,
 Around them cause the beams of peace to shine;
 When this frail fabrick mingles with the dust,
 Their souls shall rise immortal and divine.

11:7:11

F I N I S .

In this sad season let the affluent lend
 Kind help to those whom Fortune may deny;
 In this sad season may they find a friend,
 Whose timely bounty may their wants supply.

O Charity divine! Celestial Maid!
 Thou sacred offspring of the eternal mind!
 For not thy joy-diffusing hand be stay'd,
 Whilst thou an object worthy thee canst find.